

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 5, 2012 in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Gibson.

3. ROLL CALL/ MOTIONS FOR EXCUSED ABSENCE

Present: Commissioners D'anjou, Gibson, Polcari, Rizzo, Skoll and Chairperson Uchima.

Absent: Commissioner Weideman (excused).

Also Present: Planning Manager Lodan, Planning Assistant Yumul Plans Examiner Noh, Sr. Fire Prevention Officer Kazandjian Associate Civil Engineer Symons, Plans Examiner Gorbin, and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the agenda was posted on the Public Notice Board at 3031 Torrance Boulevard on Friday, August 31, 2012.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved for the approval of the August 1, 2012 Planning Commission minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote, with Commissioner Skoll abstaining (absent Commissioner Weideman).

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS – None.

7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1 – None.

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Chairperson Uchima reviewed the policies and procedures of the Planning Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to the City Council.

8. TIME EXTENSIONS – None.

9. SIGN HEARINGS – None.

10. CONTINUED HEARINGS – None.

11. **WAIVERS** - None.

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Agenda Item 15A was considered out of order at this time.

15A. **LUS12-00002: CITY OF TORRANCE**

Land Use Study for consideration of an Ordinance amending Torrance Municipal Code Section 92.2.9 subsection (d)(5) regarding the sales operations to the public for Christmas tree lots.

Planning Manager Lodan reported that currently Christmas tree lot operators may not begin selling Christmas trees until December 1; that a number of them have requested that the start date be changed to the day after Thanksgiving so they can compete with sales lots in other nearby cities; and that staff was recommending that the Ordinance regulating Christmas tree lots be amended to allow this change.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan advised that the actual wording of the amendment will be addressed when the item is forwarded to the City Council.

MOTION: Commissioner Rizzo moved to concur with the staff recommendation to modify TMC Section 92.2.9 subsection (d)(5) to allow Christmas tree sales operations to begin the Friday after Thanksgiving and to direct staff to prepare an item to be forwarded to the City Council. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Weideman).

12. **FORMAL HEARINGS**

12A. **PRE12-00009: JAN TROBAUGH (MARK LACHARITE HOMES, INC.)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of a new two-story, single-family residence with attached garage on property located within the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5253 Bindewald Road.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Yumul introduced the request.

Jan Trobaugh, project architect, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He reported that the existing structure will be completely demolished and a new house will be constructed, noting that this property has been in disrepair since at least 2009.

Carol Tuckman, 5249 Bindewald, stated that she was delighted about this project, but wants to make sure that the hillside is not destabilized during the construction process and that this property does not drain onto her property because this has been a problem in the past.

Plans Examiner Noh advised that during the plan check process for a new home, the applicant must provide a structural analysis, a complete soils report and a grading plan, which will ensure that the stability of the hillside is maintained. He confirmed that the grading plan will be designed so that the property drains to the street.

Mr. Trobaugh stated that he was aware of concerns about the hillside and had spoken with neighbors below to assure them that nothing will be built on the hillside. He reported that soil will be imported so the lot can be graded to drain to the street and the only water going into the hillside will be what falls from the sky.

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll and passed by unanimous voice vote (absent Commissioner Weideman).

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to approve CUP12-00009 as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner D'anjou and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Weideman).

Planning Assistant Yumul read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-052.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 12-052. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Weideman).

Chairperson Uchima noted that there is a boarded-up house directly across the street from this property and expressed the hope that it also will be renovated.

12B. CUP12-00012, DVP12-00007: EL POLLO LOCO STORE 6098

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit and Development Permit to allow the construction and operation of a drive-through restaurant on property located in the H-PR Zone at 19330 Hawthorne Boulevard.

Recommendation: Approval.

Brad Podosin, representing El Pollo Loco, applicant, reported that the restaurant lost its lease down the street approximately one year ago and has been looking for a new location in Torrance ever since and he believes this shopping center represents a great opportunity. He noted that the building will be a new prototype for El Pollo Loco.

Commissioner Skoll stated that he was glad the restaurant has found a new location because a number of people have mentioned that they missed it and hoped it would relocate.

Mr. Podosin responded that the company wants to build the new restaurant as quickly as possible because Torrance has been a great market.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Mr. Podosin provided clarification regarding on-site circulation.

Chairperson Uchima asked if this will be the only restaurant in this shopping center, and Planning Manager Lodan stated that he did not believe there was sufficient parking to allow the development of another restaurant.

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous voice vote (absent Commissioner Weideman).

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved to approve CUP12-00012 and DVP12-00007 as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Weideman).

Planning Assistant Yumul read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 12-057 and 12-058.

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 12-057 and 12-058. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Weideman).

**12C. DVP12-00008, MOD12-00005, DIV12-00006, WAV12-00010: JEFF ROBINSON/
SCOTT ROBINSON HONDA**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Development Permit and a Modification of a previously approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP69-23) to allow the expansion and renovation of an existing automobile dealership, the incorporation of the adjacent southerly lots into the dealership operation, and the construction of a carwash, in conjunction with a Division of Lot to consolidate parcels and for the abandonment of a portion of the public alley on the Final Parcel Map, and a Waiver of the required landscape setback requirement along Hawthorne Boulevard on properties located in the H-PR and R1(P1-PP) Zones at 20340 Hawthorne Boulevard.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Assistant Yumul introduced the request and noted supplemental material consisting of correspondence received after the agenda item was completed and modifications to the conditions of approval.

Commissioner Gibson announced that she would not be participating in this hearing because she lives within the notification area and exited Council Chambers.

Commissioner Skoll disclosed that he bought his car at Scott Robinson Honda seven years ago and continues to have it serviced at their facility on Crenshaw, however, this would not influence his decision in this case.

Jeff Robinson, representing Scott Robinson Honda, applicant, noted that this company has been part of the community for more than 51 years. He explained that in order to better serve customers and comply with the requirements/standards of American Honda, the dealership would like to enlarge the showroom, increase the outdoor showroom area, and create a state-of-the-art repair facility. He voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval with the following exceptions:

Condition No. 3 - *Requires 12-foot landscaped setback along property frontage on Hawthorne Boulevard for all of Site A and Site C.*

Mr. Robinson explained that enlarging the landscaped setback from the existing 5 feet to 12 feet would reduce the display area for used cars by 33% and this area is critical to the dealership's success. Additionally, it would cause a reduction in the back-up space for customer parking near the showroom and it has been his experience that if customers have difficulty parking at one dealership, they simply move on to the next. He requested that a Waiver of this requirement be granted.

Condition No. 47 (per supplemental material) – *Requires the applicants to provide an irrevocable offer to dedicate a 12-wide street easement along the northerly 200 feet of Parcel 1 frontage for a future northbound right turn only lane.*

Mr. Robinson explained that he objected to this condition because it would eliminate a large portion of the display area and there is no need for a dedicated right-turn lane because there is no backup of traffic at this intersection.

Condition No. 49 (per supplemental material) – *Requires the applicants to remove all existing encroachments, including existing fence, parking inventory, trash bins, storage containers, etc. within the public alley of Site C.*

Mr. Robinson requested that the City vacate the alley since it is not needed for access and it has been fenced off and used for the storage of vehicles for several years.

Commissioner Skoll noted that Mr. Robinson's letter in the supplemental material mentions that the showroom will have the new Honda Generation 3 façade.

Mr. Robinson stated that the showroom will feature a tall glass cylindrical foyer and it will be showpiece for American Honda since its headquarters are in Torrance. He reported that the dealership works closely with American Honda and participates in its pilot programs.

Commissioner Rizzo questioned whether the dedication of the street easement was requested because it is anticipated that there will be more traffic due to the Del Amo extension.

Planning Manager Lodan related his understanding that this condition was included because both Hawthorne Boulevard and Del Amo Boulevard are classified as arterials and Torrance's General Plan calls for dedicated turn lanes when two arterials intersect to facilitate traffic movement. He stated that he did not believe the condition was related to traffic generation or the anticipated impact of the Del Amo extension. He advised that the entire 12-foot width may not be needed if Caltrans relinquishes control of Hawthorne Boulevard to the City.

Commissioner Skoll stated that he would not want this issue to be a deal-breaker and hopes that a compromise can be reached.

Mr. Robinson explained that he only got notice that Condition No. 47 had been amended at 5:08 p.m. this evening; that the earlier version of the condition required only that the dealership consider the dedication; and that he was uncomfortable with the word "irrevocable."

Chairperson Uchima asked for clarification regarding Mr. Robinson's request that the public alley mentioned in Condition No. 49 be vacated.

Mr. Robinson explained that the alley area has functioned as a storage lot for years and the dealership would be glad to clean it up and maintain it if the City will vacate it.

Associate Civil Engineer Symons reported that staff only recently realized that the fenced area at the rear of the former Saturn dealership was a public alley and that's the reason Condition No. 49 was added after the staff report had been completed. He advised that there is a vacation process that requires the approval of the City Council, but that would be separate from the action taken this evening.

Brian Kurahashi, 3628 Sara Drive, expressed concerns about noise from loudspeakers and spillover light from the parking lot. He indicated that he was also concerned about whether there was adequate employee parking since employees from other dealerships park on his street. He reported that he has observed test drives in his neighborhood but it was not a major concern.

Mr. Robinson responded that the dealership does not use loudspeakers; that the lighting will have glare-shields so there will be no spillover into neighboring properties; that there will be adequate parking for all employees; and that the dealership has a clearly defined test drive route that does not go through residential neighborhoods. He stated that the dealership prides itself on how it deals with neighbors and offered to provide Mr. Kurahashi with his cell phone number so he can contact him directly if he has any concerns.

In response to Chairperson Uchima's inquiry, Mr. Robinson confirmed that all construction activities will take place within the permitted hours of construction and that all construction vehicles will be parked on the site.

Commissioner Skoll noted that the staff report mentions that a resident on Sara Drive has expressed concerns about large trucks unloading vehicles in the alley behind his residence.

Mr. Robinson reported that he met with the resident and explained that the dealership has two off-site storage lots where vehicles are delivered and the alley will not be used for this purpose.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll and passed by unanimous voice vote (absent Commissioner Weideman).

A brief discussion ensued regarding Condition No. 49, and Commissioners indicated that they favored allowing the dealership to request a vacation of the public alley.

Planning Manager Lodan recommended that Condition No. 49 be amended to state that the applicants shall be required to remove all existing encroachments within the public alley "unless the alley is vacated prior to occupancy of the new dealership."

Discussion continued, and it was the consensus of the Commission to revert to the original wording of Condition No. 47 thereby allowing the applicants to work with staff in considering the dedication/irrevocable offer of an easement for the future construction of a right-turn lane on Hawthorne Boulevard rather than requiring it.

With regard to Condition No. 3, Chairperson Uchima indicated that he favored granting the requested Waiver of the 12-foot landscaping setback requirement because of Mr. Robinson's testimony that it would damage the business.

Planning Manager Lodan advised that staff was not in favor of granting the Waiver because other dealerships, including the Audi dealership and Martin Chevrolet, have been required to provide the full 12 feet when they remodeled and added new showrooms. He explained that the area in front of the new showroom can accommodate a 12-foot landscaped planter without impacting any of the parking so the only area impacted is the display area for used cars. He pointed out that the dealership is adding 22,000 square feet of display area with the acquisition of the former Saturn dealership and the additional landscaping would take only a fraction of this.

Chairperson Uchima stated that while he understands the dealership is adding a considerable amount of space, the used car display area that would be eliminated by the landscaping is prime frontage along Hawthorne Boulevard.

Planning Manager Lodan reiterated staff's position that there would still be plenty of display area on this site, noting that there is already 5 feet of landscaping so only 7 feet would have to be eliminated from the display area. He strongly recommended that if the Commission was inclined to grant the Waiver, that it only be granted for the used car display area and not the area in front of the showroom. He stated that he was aware of only two dealerships – Cadillac and Nissan - that were granted a Waiver of the landscape requirement.

The public hearing was reopened so Mr. Robinson could comment.

Mr. Robinson urged that the Commission grant the Waiver, relating his belief that complying with the landscaping setback requirement would greatly damage the dealership's business. He contended that enlarging the landscaped area in front of the showroom would make customer parking too tight and discourage people from coming to the dealership. He explained that the frontage on Hawthorne Boulevard is a more valuable display area than the area to the rear of the lot. He suggested that it was easier for the Audi dealership to provide the required landscaped setback because they were constructing an entirely new building, while this project is constrained by existing buildings. He noted that Scott Robinson Honda sells more cars than the Cadillac and Nissan dealerships combined.

Planning Manager Lodan advised that there would still be more than adequate back-up space for the customer parking in front of the showroom with the additional 7 feet of landscaping and staff strongly believes it should be required as a matter of equity. He explained that staff did not request that the applicants provide the 12-foot landscaped setback on the corner lot since the dealership does not own it, but had expected that they would comply with the landscaping requirement on the balance of the lot.

Chairperson Uchima asked if there was anywhere landscaping could be added.

Mr. Robinson responded that the dealership will be removing the seven-foot wide concrete sidewalk on Hawthorne Boulevard and replacing it with drought-resistant landscaping and this frontage is approximately 800 feet. Additionally, he noted that the dealership will be taking down the large pole sign and replacing it with a monument sign and closing a curb cut on Hawthorne Boulevard.

In response to Chairperson Uchima's inquiry, Mr. Robinson confirmed that the rendering submitted to the Commission accurately depicts the project's landscaping.

Chairperson Uchima stated that he has been to the dealership and the service entrance and used car parking is very constricted so he understood Mr. Robinson's concern about eliminating space in this area. He indicated that he also understood staff's desire to have the site upgraded to meet current standards and would fully support staff's recommendation if this was new construction. He questioned whether Mr. Robinson would agree to comply with the landscaping requirement if at some point in the future the service center building is demolished or additional property is acquired.

Mr. Robinson indicated that he had no objection to such a condition.

MOTION: Commissioner Rizzo moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll and passed by unanimous voice vote (absent Commissioners Gibson and Weideman).

Chairperson Uchima stated that he believed it would be a hardship for the dealership to comply with the landscaping setback requirement at this time due to the potential that it could hurt the business, therefore he favored granting the Waiver until such time the existing building constraining the site is demolished.

Commissioner Skoll and Commissioner Polcari noted their agreement with Chairperson Uchima's remarks.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to approve DVP12-00008, DIV12-00006, MOD12-00005 and WAV12-00010, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff with the following modifications:

Modify

No. 3 That the project shall provide the required 12-foot landscaping setback along the property frontage on Hawthorne Boulevard at such time it is feasible due to the removal of the existing service/used car building for all of Site A (APNs 7524-002-016, 7524-002-0017, 7524-002-018, 7524-002-019 and 7524-002-043) and Site C (APN 7524-002-025) to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director.

No. 47 That the applicants shall ~~provide an irrevocable offer~~ work with staff in considering a dedication/irrevocable offer to dedicate a 12-foot wide street easement along property frontage (200 feet northerly Hawthorne Boulevard) for future northbound right turn only lane.

No. 49 That the applicants shall remove all existing encroachments, including the existing fence, parked inventory, trash bins, storage containers, etc. within the public alley of Site C (APN 7524-002-025) unless the alley is vacated prior to occupancy of the new dealership.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll and passed by unanimous vote (absent Commissioners Gibson and Weideman).

Planning Manager Lodan advised that resolutions reflecting the Commission's action would be brought back for approval at a later date.

13. **RESOLUTIONS** – None.

14. **PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS** – None.

15. **MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS**

15A. **LUS12-00002: CITY OF TORRANCE**

Considered out of order, see page 2.

16. **REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS** – None.

17. **LIST OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES**

Planning Manager Lodan reviewed the agenda for the September 19, 2012 Planning Commission meeting.

18. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2**

18A. Commissioner Polcari requested an excused absence for the September 19 Planning Commission meeting.

Chairperson Uchima, seconded by Commissioner D'anjou, so moved and the motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

18B. Commissioner Skoll requested information about new construction on Hawthorne Boulevard replacing a house that was torn down. Planning Manager Lodan advised that the project was approved some time ago and it is a mixed-use development with retail on the ground floor and residential units above designed by Withee-Malcolm.

18C. Commissioner Skoll related his understanding that a third store is to be built on the former K-Mart site. Planning Manager Lodan reported that plans for a grocery store have been submitted for the K-Mart property but the grocery store has not been identified

18D. Commissioner Skoll asked about the status of the farmland at Torrance Airport. Planning Manager Lodan related his understanding that the City is soliciting bids for the farmland.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan noted that an engineering firm is currently doing cable strength-testing on vacant airport land.

18C. Chairperson Uchima asked about the status of the Sunrise project on Hawthorne Boulevard.

Planning Manager Lodan reported that there have been some indications that the property might be transferred to a new owner or from one part of the Sunrise company to another, but he was not aware of any plans to restart the project. He confirmed that the hillside is periodically inspected to ensure that it is stable.

18D. Chairperson Uchima noted that the boarded-up house on Bindewald he mentioned earlier during the discussion of Agenda Item 12A looks terrible and the yard is overgrown with weeds and asked if the City has the authority to require that the site be cleaned up.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan advised that the City has a property maintenance ordinance but it's sometimes difficult to determine the property's owner when it is a foreclosure.

Planning Manager Lodan offered to have Environmental staff look into the matter to see what could be done.

19. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:50 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, September 19, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Submitted October 3, 2012 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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